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THE CULTURE OF POLICY: AGGREGATE VERSUS INDIVIDUALIST THINKING ABOUT THE REGULATION OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper explores the cultural images that underlie educational policy and regulation. Based on interviews with California officials involved in educational policy and governance, it argues that strategies for regulating education are limited by the commitment of officials and their publics to a language of individual benefits and individual rights as the central goods public policy should realize. The individualist imagery indirectly leads regulators to stress compliance with mandatory goods defined as rights, over encouragement of aggregate-level educational outcomes. The paper concludes by examining how some California education administrators utilize ideals of individual initiative and local control to legitimate a broader state role in education.

This essay is concerned with an issue that normally lies just beyond the horizon of debates over policy and governance in education: that is, the cultural understandings that shape and constrain the legitimate ends of public policy. Problems of governance in education arise in part fron the distinctive technical and institutional features of the educational enterprise. But the difficulties of educational governance are also rooted in deeper American dilemmas, particularly those concerning the relationship between private claims and public purposes.[1]

To put the matter crudely, Americans are, bit by bit, assembling the elements of a centralized welfare state. Whether prompted by judicial or legislative action, much of what we have called legalization in education involves expanding the sphere of public responsibility, making the claims of individuals on the public sphere more extensive and more uniform, and integrating local, state, and federal levels of responsibility. The problem is that both politically and culturally Americans do not like centralized planning and administration. Their vocabulary of moral and political debate rests almost entirely on conceptions of society as made up of autonomous, freely choosing individuals who should, at least ideally, be responsible for their own welfare.[2] American ideology conceives the role of government narrowly, justifying it not as planning or providing for the welfare of society as a whole, but as overcoming problems of coordination, conflict, or corruption arising out of the actions of individuals. We increasingly have a welfare state, but we remain unable to generate culturally legitimate commitments to public purposes which might guide its actions.

Thus as federal and state involvement in education grows, there is an increased sense of crisis. One way to describe this is as a loss of a sense of mission and purpose in education. But the other way to understand the

frustration and dissatisfaction of those involved in educational governance is to recognize that what we have done is to expand the sphere of government regulation and centralized controls over education while failing to tie these to a set of mandates or positive educational purposes government is supposed to pursue. New controls seem necessary to achieve particular ends, but the whole apparatus of regulations, bureaucratic enforcement mechanisms, and mandated programs starts to seem illegitimate. In Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville (1969: 14) says that neither the exercise of power nor obedience degrades men (and women). Rather the possibility of apathy and moral debasement on the part of citizens, and despotism on the part of their rulers arises when persons obey a power they believe to be illegitimate. Without a sense of legitimate collective purposes, public power in America is bound to remain illegitimate, frustrating and demeaning those subject to its authority, demoralizing those who exercise it.

I wish to suggest, then, that a proper focus of thinking and research for those who wish to understand the crisis of educational governance is the set of cultural images and understandings that provide the basis for policy debate.[3] The approach I have pursued here is a set of exploratory interviews with officials involved in formulating, implementing, and overseeing educational policy in California. I have been particularly interested in finding out how understandings of the public purposes education might serve are formulated and justified by those who deal with the nitty-gritty of educational governance on a day-to-day basis.

Many scholars have noted that public education in American lacks any single, clear public mandate. While scholars can point out rich, and continually evolving, public purposes which have emerged over the course of American educational history (Cremin, 1961, 1977 ; Tyack, 1974), both state and

federal educational regulation has steadfastly avoided formulating a set of educational purposes that might guide public policy. As John Meyer (1979: 2-3) has noted:

> With all the expansion of the Federal role in education in recent decades, this role is still restricted to funding and authority in various special educational programs and situations. There is no legitimated Federal or national policy covering main educational issues. There are no national curricula, no national tests for admission to the next level of schooling, no national criteria for achievement, no national definitions of appropriate teaching methods, and no national principles for accrediting schools or teachers.

The states, where legal responsibility for education is lodged, do set minimal standards for the provision of education by professionally qualified personnel, and sometimes specify the general outlines of such matters as curriculum and textbook selection. However states, like the federal government, lack clear, overall educational policies, even where they are extensively responsible for providing or administering educational funding. In a major study of state administration of Federal aid to education, Michael Kirst (1972: 67) and colleagues

> found little evidence of systematic attempts to shape the various federal programs to serve integrated and carefully articulated educational priorities. We looked for such evidence as consolidated application forms; emphasis on comprehensive management information systems, and a coordinated approach of the monitoring of LEA [Local Education Agency] programs.

Educational policy is thus fragmented at the state as well as federal levels. "No state policy for federal aid exists; there are only policies and guidelines for each federal title. Moreover, the federal categories display no consistent priority or coherent policy" (Kirst, 1972: 69). Indeed, the federal government has attempted to deal with "this confusing and independently operated array of categorical programs" by turning "to the states for comprehensive statewide planning" (Berke and Kirst, 1972: 383).

States have indeed taken responsibility for administering federal monies, but without comprehensive policy guidance. As Berke and Kirst (1972: 389) observe:

> An overarching problem of state administration in general, but particularly in education, is the norm of "localism." The respect and deference to local control, strongest in New England, maintains a firm foothold in all states. In education, "the religion of localism" is a shorthand expression of a sociological norm which says that the local communities should be the dominant partners in the American governmental mix of federal, state, and local entities. This means that the LEA should have the major voice in determining policies, directions and operations of schools. Localism helps to restrict the prerogatives, scope, and style of SEA [State Education Agency] operations.

Despite the growing concentration of fiscal and administrative control at federal, and especially state levels, there is an enduring reluctance or ambivalence about formulating educational purposes that might guide (and restrain) the uses of this growing power. This uncertainty about purpose, the public culture from which it derives, and the creative improvisations that education administrators with centralized public responsibility necessarily make are the focus of this essay.

The Compliance Paradox

Several contributors to this volume focus on two competing models of educational governance, one a legalistic model of compliance to fixed rules, and the other a more differentiated strategy based on problem solving and rewards designed to elicit willing adherence to the spirit as well as the letter of policy mandates. Berman (1981) contrasts "compliance" with "learning," and argues that legally-induced reforms often fail because courts and administrative agencies rely too heavily on the compliance model. The compliance model, he argues, ignores problems of institutional capacity to achieve mandated ends in favor of the assumption that only a lack of willingness stands in the way of reform. The compliance model

also encourages conformity to the letter rather than the spirit of regulations, discourages experimentation and learning in attempts to solve institutional problems, and imposes uniform (and often unproven) solutions on local institutions which may have quite varied problems, capacities, and willingness to meet reformers' goals. Judith Gruber (1981) makes a parallel distinction among different strategies for control of educational bureaucracies, pointing out that control through "authority" may be ineffective due to a combination of the resistance and the superior expertise of the bureaucrats whom the public and their representatives seek to control. As an alternative to control through authority, she suggests strategies based on "exchange," in which groups seeking to control educational policy offer real inducements to educational bureaucrats in return for their cooperation. Milbrey McLaughlin (1981), in turn, contrasts courts and legislatures as agents of reform, emphasizing that courts are less able to implement flexible problem-solving approaches to social change and tend instead to impose uniform, and sometimes unrealistic and unenforceable, solutions to complex problems.

Several scholars have thus described contrasting approaches to educational governance: on the one hand, rigid and frequently ineffective strategies based on enforcing compliance with fixed rules or standards, versus, on the other, more flexible strategies oriented toward encouraging voluntary cooperation, solving problems, and rewarding substantive progress toward public goals. If then compliance-based strategies have so many disadvantages, and strategies that permit learning and negotiation have many advantages, why have the objectives of educational reform so often been attempted on the basis of the assumptions built into the

compliance model?

There are of course institutional reasons why much of recent educational reform has come from courts enforcing rights, rather than legislatures articulating comprehensive public policy. And, as Paul Peterson (1981) points out, there are institutional and political reasons why federal legislative mandates often have a weak sense of particular educational purposes to be served and a strong bias toward elaborate formulas to enforce the distribution of funds they allocate. But I would like to argue that one fundamental ingredient of the problem is cultural, resting on the essential individualism, moralism, and localism of American conceptions of the public good.

Historically, of course, public education in America has rested on a richly elaborated set of public purposes—in essence the creation of productive and democratic citizens, a kind of nation building through the creation of virtuous individuals (Meyer et al., 1979; Mead, 1951; Cremin, 1977). But these public purposes are irreducibly individualist in their basic assumptions. The public good can be realized only by and through the moral construction or reconstruction of individuals.

This fusion of individualism and moralism pervades American public life, emerging particularly strongly in relation to education, which is the quintessential technique for pursuing public goals by attempting to shape particular kinds of individuals. When Americans wish, for example, to reform society, they do so by attempting the moral reformation of individuals (Boyer 1978). Hervé Varenne (1977), in a brilliant study of an American small town, has argued that the essential principle of American group formation, for groups ranging from churches, to friendship groups,

to the local Farm Bureau and the town itself, is that individuals are the constituent units of group life and that groups existed only as the direct expression of the voluntary coming together of individuals in pursuit of their own ends. This individualist principle, in turn, makes group life dependent on the moral agreement, and thus the character and will, of individuals, creating strong pressure for both consensus and conformity within groups.

Individualism and moralism emerge with great clarity in other arenas of American public policy. Constance Perin (1977), for example, has analyzed the public images that lie behind local decisions about housing and land use in American cities--images of such fundamentally individualist matters as the moral differences between homeowners and renters or the moral dangers of urban life itself. Similarly, Judith de Neufville (1981) has examined the symbols and myths invoked in land-use planning, particularly the myths of private property and small-scale ownership which developed around the "Jeffersonian image of the yeoman farmer" (p. 6). Finally, Joseph Gusfield (1981) has done an extensive study of the symbolic definitions surrounding drinking-driving as a public issue. The problem of automobile deaths in accidents involving drunken drivers has been defined entirely as a matter of persuading (or forcing) individuals not to mix drinking and driving. Other kinds of public policies, involving such matters as the design of automobiles or highways, for example, have been ignored in pursuit of the highly dramatized image of the "killer-drunk." Here individualism, moralism, and the use of compliance-oriented public policy merge perfectly. The National Safety Council and most other "traffic safety organizations have seen the driver as the major causal agent in

auto accidents and championed improving driver abilities as the major policy in controlling them" (p. 43). One approach has been driver education campaigns, but criminal sanctions have been even more important. "The theory of deterrence through criminal law enforcement has determined the major system of public responsibility for automobile safety in the United States. Traffic laws and their regulation operate on the theory that the individual motorist can be led to more diligence in driving through the fear of police apprehension and legal punishment" (p. 45). Even more telling, perhaps, for our purposes, is Gusfield's claim that during the 1960s, when the focus of public action began to shift toward such issues as safety in the design and manufacture of automobiles, the individualist and moralist aspect of public policy remained. "[T]he new consciousness shift[s] the focus of action from state and private associations to the federal government, but also replaces the motorist, drunk or sober, by the automobile industry as the bête noire of safety advocates" (p. 47).

Unlike traffic safety, land-use planning, or health-care regulation, educational policy does not conflict directly with ideals of private property and the inhibition against interfering with private economic and market choices. What replaces the sanctity of private property in the educational arena is the tradition of local control of schools. Education is legitimately a public function to the extent that it embodies and perpetuates the values and choices of a local community.[4]

There are thus two fundamental dimensions to the cultural dilemmas faced by those who would govern education at the state and federal levels. First, educational purposes are conceived in largely individualist and moralist terms which make it difficult to formulate public policies

to govern the kinds of aggregate or collective outcomes with which most policy makers deal. Second, as federal and state responsibility for funding public education grows, the tradition of local control still means that there is no legitimate state or federal responsibility for education as a whole. Both these aspects of the American political culture have, paradoxically, fed the tendency of state and federal regulators to stress compliance over problem-solving and assistance.

If education is fundamentally neither a federal nor state responsibility, national and state intervention in education can be justified only as a defense of individual rights against neglect or malice on the part of local school authorities. Federal funding for education, for example, has been defined as responding to special and narrowly delimited educational crises—failure of schools to teach disadvantaged children, the extra burden on local school districts of educating children of federal employees who do not pay local taxes, a crisis in national defense preparedness, or the special educational needs of handicapped children. Although in actual practice each of these federal programs is rapidly expanded to allow broader and more geographically dispersed funding than its original mandate implied (Peterson, 1981), there is still no overall federal interest in education beyond correcting specific failures and abuses.

Major federal interventions in education have been undertaken to ensure the "rights" of disadvantaged groups of children and parents—economically disadvantaged children, handicapped children, and limited-English speaking children. The appeal to rights seems to legitimate

federal intervention even in autonomous local arenas like schools. However the language of "rights" implies precisely the kinds of absolute but limited claims that preclude more adaptive and flexible educational governance. In theory, at least, negotiation, compromise, adaptation to local capacities and circumstances, and continual learning from experience are inappropriate when applied to matters of rights.[5]

If federal and state roles in education are limited to enforcing individual rights and correcting serious flaws in the coverage or implementation of locally organized educational programs, then it is little wonder that federal and state educational administrators so often rely on the compliance mode in their attempts to influence schools. Even when what the courts or federal and state administrators impose are in fact demands for institutional innovation, for improved services, or for novel programs to serve formerly neglected groups, such innovative programs must be defined as correcting flaws or inequities in current programs, not as developing a positive educational program.

In America, then, the suspicion of public power and an inability to formulate clear public purposes leads paradoxically to a stress on compliance by public officials who have a stronger mandate to protect individual rights and curb local abuses than to pursue active public ends. These tendencies in turn interact in peculiar ways with the individualism and moralism of American civic culture. On the one hand, a stress on the virtues of voluntarism and local initiative serves as a brake on state and federal intervention, sometimes, for example, leading to the provision of federal monies with no clear provision for effective monitoring or

oversight (Berke and Kirst, 1972). On the other hand, individualism and moralism give educational governance a punitive cast. Federal and state administrators are not implementing new social policy; they are enforcing law against the recalcitrance of bad, law-violating schools and school districts. The individualist ethos underlying much of our social policy means that it is more legitimate to find and punish "bad" school districts which are misusing federal monies or failing to offer equal education to particular groups of children than to create new educational policy. An ideology that enshrines the virtuous individuals of the local community as the source of good public policy cannot suggest change or improvement in that policy without implying failure, or even malice, on the part of those individuals. The expansion of centralized controls then almost requires finding "bad people" in order to justify public authority. Americans are embarrassed about articulating common purposes, and they prefer sheriffs to either politicians or planners.

Varieties of Public Purpose

The distinction I have drawn above between righting particular wrongs and constructing more comprehensive public policy is of course considerably muted in practice. While legislation and regulation may be framed in terms of rights, political bargaining and negotiation enter at every stage of the process. Demands for compliance can themselves serve as a bargaining resources leading to compromise and cooperation between regulators and regulated. All of this constitutes an ongoing political process in which interests are brought to bear and conceptions of public purpose offered and defended. The interesting research question is what kind of moral

language and what conceptions of purpose emerge in the public arena, and with what effect.

The problem for effective governance in education is not that there is no legitimate public language of policy debate, but that the dominant language enshrines individualistic images of the values that should guide policy. If we examine the public attitudes tapped by Gallup Polls (Elam, 1978), for example, we find that "lack of discipline" is consistently identified as the major problem confronting the public schools. When the Gallup Poll, itself adopting an individualistic language, asked for the chief reasons why people "want their children to get an education," getting better jobs ranked first, "to get along better with people at all levels of society" ranked second, and making more money ranked third (Elam, 1978: 121). When the public has been asked its specific priorities for the public schools in terms of educational content, it has in general put skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic high (1972 poll, Elam, 1978: 122; 1975 poll, Elam, page 231,) while knowledge about other nations, "the history of mankind," and "the great leaders in art, literature" has fared less well (p. 231). On the other hand, teaching students to "respect law and authority" has also been a central concern (p. 122) along with the pervasive desire for greater discipline. Finally, the public would like to see "better teachers."

> By "better teachers," the public does not necessarily mean teachers who are better trained or more knowledgeable in the subjects they teach.
>
> They are much more inclined to think of "good" teachers as the teachers who take a personal interest in each student, who try to understand each student and his or her problems, who encourage students in the subjects taught so that they will achieve high grades, and, finally, who inspire students to set high goals in life for themselves. (p. 340)

For both policy makers and the general public, the parents and students

who are the consumers of educational services are presumed to be autonomous, freely-choosing actors who know what educational services they want and how much they are willing to pay for schooling. Teachers are supposed to know what the content of a good education should be; and good, dedicated teachers are thought to be at the heart of the educational enterprise. Parents want "the best" education for their children at a reasonable cost, and the community has a diffuse interest in the creation of competent citizens, capable employees, and so forth. Choices about what other values the schools should promote are thought best left to representatives of local community values--school boards, PTAs, and parents and teachers themselves. (Gallup Polls also show the public agreeing strongly that local authorities should be able to decide how federal money for education should be spent and that state and federal regulations often hinder local public school education [Elam, 1978: 319-20; 362-3].) The role of state government has been to facilitate adequate provision of these services (through licensing laws, certification requirements, compulsory attendance laws, school building codes, and so forth), while the federal government has intervened primarily to ensure equity in access to educational goods, however defined.

This fundamentally individualistic and voluntarist imagery has, as I pointed out above, provided justification for substantial federal and state involvement in education, under a patchwork of programs targeted to specific groups. But it provides little guidance to those directly involved in formulating and administering educational policy. By its very nature, the work of these legislators and administrators implicitly, and sometimes

explicitly, raises questions about aggregate planning and public purpose. The difficulty they face is to link the work they do and the choices they must make to a meaningful moral and political vocabulary.*

Individualistic language is in part enforced by political realities. Because those involved in the politics and administration of education are often trying to win funds for schooling from potentially reluctant legislators and voters, they tend to stay close to the public language of "quality education" or the "right" of each child to an education. As one former federal administrator put it, the "effect is better if you translate it into human terms, rather than thinking in big numbers." Political justification may also merge with personal conviction. The former Secretary of Education, for example, passionately defended bilingual education entirely by talking in terms of the rights of particular, aggrieved, individual children to equal educational opportunity.[6] On the other hand, it may be most difficult for those directly involved in educational politics or administration to develop any comprehensive view of educational policy. A local school official, with long experience dealing with federal and state legislators and administrators, claimed that it was difficult for anyone to think comprehensively about educational policy because the world of educational policy makers was "so hectic." Legislators just want to know "what works," and few administrators have a mandate to think comprehensively about education. Most are simply trying to administer particular legislatively mandated programs. State legislators, who legally have the authority to determine the shape and quality of public education, may be least likely

* The section that follows is based on interviews with California legislative staff and state Department of Education administrators, except where indicated. I both quote and paraphrase my interviewees, from notes taken during each interview. Interviews were conducted in 1981 and '82.

to formulate overall educational policy. A senior staff member of an education committee of the California legislature, when asked about educational policy, said the legislature had no educational policy. "Policy is ideological; that's close to God. Policy isn't a series of bills." Particular crises will bring legislative response, but the legislature is a "reactive rather than proactive" body. Legislators act on publicly shared perceptions of what is going downhill or uphill. But otherwise the legislative contribution to educational policy making is "totally fragmented." Priorities are worked out in the budget, but not in the light of any overall educational policy.

State versus local control, the legislative staff member argued, is the consuming issue of educational governance. But the state has taken a contradictory position. In 1968 the legislature began passing bills to give the locals more power, and by 1973 had a "permissive bill," leaving most matters to local control. But at the same time, they have kept aiding categorical programs and building up the State Department of Education. While the legislature doesn't govern education, its members have little faith that any other public body can either. "I have no faith in local school boards, but even less in the legislature. The local school board can play an ombudsman role, providing redress of grievances, but school boards can't really initiate policy." The state's Department of Education ought to provide leadership in education, but it doesn't. It sees its role as advocating all educational programs, rather than choosing among them, and it has been successful in getting money from the legislature, but that is all.

This sophisticated, cynical legislative staff member did, as it turned out, have ideas about what would most help education in the State, but he defined these as private views, distinct from his official role. He said that the critical need was for staff development for teachers, "because the teaching profession has fallen apart." He went on to describe the political fragmentation of California teachers and their loss of power and influence in the State. But even here, he suggested, the role of the State must remain limited. "Teachers as a group need help desperately, but the State would have to pretend teachers were doing it." A few Teacher Centers and Staff Development Centers have recently been set up, and they work pretty well, in his view, but it would be much too expensive to give teachers the help they really need. Thus, in this experienced legislative staff member's view, little in the way of comprehensive educational policy either can or should come from legislative initiative. Ideally education should be shaped by the initiative of private actors, like teachers' organizations, and state action must remain minimalist in aim, designed only to remedy the worst inadequacies in the current system.

If legislatures are largely unwilling or unable to think comprehensively about educational policy, we might nonetheless expect to find some capacity for overall planning at the point where competing educational demands meet—in budget decisions for example. And indeed, a staff member of the Legislative Analyst's Office, responsible for analyzing and making recommendations about all items in the California governor's budget and analyzing the fiscal impact of all legislation, spoke with great intensity about the need for a comprehensive educational policy against which the success or failure of

particular programs could be judged. The State pays for an increasing share of education in California, he argued, yet it gives local school districts almost no guidance about what their programs are supposed to achieve. "If you provide resources," he said, "you have to say what they're intended to be used for or it's an abdication of responsibility." And, in his view, the State completely fails to do this. At least since 1970, the legislature has removed all specific curriculum requirements and requirements for the time students must spend on specific courses. This was intended to eliminate the "seat-time straightjacket," giving local districts more flexibility and affirming that "Sacramento wasn't all-knowing." The effect is that while there are "program goals" there are no "output goals." There are lots of "little, special programs," like bilingual education or compensatory education, but there are no general goals. "What if one of these programs succeeds? What about a bilingual student who learns English? Then there are no goals for his education." The state requires that certain courses be taught, but there are no requirements in terms of the time spent on particular courses or course content. It is hard, in his view, for the legislature to address issues of educational goals, in part because of the ideology of local control and in part because of a lack of consensus. Do you, for example, "force a student to take an English literature class if the student is only interested in vocational education?" There is a very general consensus on goals: job training, reasonable literacy, and preparation for higher education, but there are no priorities. The legislature delegates the selection of priorities to the local level. This means that local people are never told what the State expects them to do with the funds it provides. "I sympathize with teachers and administrators being shot at for not doing things they haven't really

been told to do."

Despite his commitment to the ideal of coherent educational policy goals, and his acute awareness of the trade-offs that must necessarily be made between one educational goal and another, this budget analyst is in fact himself uncertain about the ends education should serve, and even more unsure about how to link up his professional concerns as a budget specialist with his personal sense of what public education could or should accomplish. In his professional role, he says, the goal is "all kids should learn up to their maximum ability in the most efficient possible system," but that doesn't give much realistic guidance. His job is to evaluate programs against "analytic goals," which must be concrete and measurable, to find out whether a particular program has the effects claimed. The educational system should accomplish goals established by the legislature. Thus the ideal program would have measurable effects on direct outcomes, like improvement in students' test scores. His office also tries to collect information directly from local school districts by asking them what programs work and why. But they are constrained in their ability to evaluate programs by the absence of clear policy priorities from the legislature.

Aside from the search for clear output goals against which to measure program success, budget analysts have few independent criteria for thinking about educational policy. In general they look for "inefficient" programs which can be cut to reduce costs, and they don't look for areas in which to increase expenditures. Programs with vague goals in which success is difficult to measure come under particular scrutiny. The legislative analyst offered

the example of the State's Program Review policy, designed in part to encourage schools to evaluate their own operations and to develop capacities to plan on their own. In his view, although the Program Review unit claimed to carry out "quality reviews," it "lacked sufficient objective measures of quality." "The claim that 'good things happen and people feel better' isn't enough. Couldn't that be achieved without spending a million dollars? If reviews are such a good thing, wouldn't people review themselves?" While in this case, as in many others, the Legislative Analyst's recommendation was overturned because the program was politically popular, he was proud that his office stuck to an "analytic basis" for evaluating programs, even if it was "mechanistic," and "frequently didn't make common sense."

Budget recommendations are also made on the basis of equity considerations, asking why some particular subgroup of children or families should receive funding, rather than having funding available to all potential recipients in the same category. The Legislative Analyst's office has recommended, for example, that state funds for reimbursement of costs of bilingual education mandated by courts and the federal government instead be reallocated to all school districts with limited-English-proficient students. "Why have four districts been given special help, just because they are under special court order, since all districts are effectively required to meet the same standards?" Similarly, the Legislative Analyst's office had recommended that a special program for gifted migrant children in one California county be discontinued in favor of using the money to identify more migrant children for the State's regular programs for gifted children. There was no rationale for funding a program which was too expensive to be made available to more than a small number of migrant children.

Responsibility for statewide budgetary planning then forces the budget examiner to think comprehensively about education. More than other state officials, he needs a comprehensive, clear educational policy in order to do his own job effectively. He thinks the State should have clear educational goals, uniformly applied. He also naturally thinks in terms of trade-offs between one program and another, and is thus particularly sensitive to the need to set priorities "in a world of limited resources." Finally, he, virtually alone among state officials, actively welcomes centralization of governance, both over program content and administration. He would, for example, have a statewide salary schedule for teachers. "Teachers' salaries shouldn't be related to the money local districts can spend, if in fact it's a statewide system. A state employee who works in San Luis Obispo doesn't earn less than one who works at the same job in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Why should teachers be paid differently?" While he sees such a proposal as too expensive to be realistic, it would implement what he sees as already the underlying reality—that education is now a state, rather than a local, responsibility. Especially since Proposition 13, he argues, all money effectively comes from the State in the sense that the legislature allocates property tax dollars. All local property taxes are now limited in amount by law, and local property taxes are counted in the State's formula as an offset to state aid. Thus "schools now have no access to local revenues. Local districts can't tax more for better schools." The "locus of decision making" for local schools has made a radical shift to the legislature and the Governor, but they in turn provide resources without taking responsibility for saying what they should be used for.

For all his emphasis on the state's responsibility for educational governance, however, the legislative analyst is surprisingly diffident about the substantive goals educational policy should pursue. However intensely he speaks of technical matters within his professional domain—equalizing salaries among school districts, or evaluating programs according to clear output goals—his professional perspective offers him little guidance about the substantive purposes education should serve. When pressed about educational priorities, he refers first to the "questions I have at a personal level." And these questions are primarily matters of resources insufficient to meet competing goals. "Are we funding schools at a level sufficient to accomplish our goals? Are students spending enough time in school? Is a five-period day sufficient to achieve higher levels of competence?" Managing education well means facing squarely the need for trade-offs. "If admission standards to the University of California go up, is this going to exclude certain kids? If you have to provide vocational education, and so forth, maybe you can't give enough students Physics or whatever to meet the University's requirements."

When asked what "quality education" would be, the budget analyst responded with embarrassment, insisting that it was "my personal view." He went out of his way to emphasize how much one's view of education depended on one's individual experience: "Of course, I think everyone should know what I do now, but I'm in my thirties. The question is what can someone reasonably be expected to learn by age eighteen." Within these qualifications, he ventured that a quality education for him should include English and American literature ("because it gives a background about what our society is");

good knowledge of history; science ("we live in a technological society and you abdicate your role as a citizen unless you can understand the technical issues raised by science"); and "critical thinking" ("which is more important than specific job training. If you are well educated then you can be trained for any job").

The budget analyst is, thus, more likely than other state officials to think in aggregate terms about educational policy, looking for comprehensive policies that produce measurable outcomes, rather than thinking purely in terms of the rights or well-being of particular children or groups of children, or of the competence or effort of teachers, parents, or local administrators. There is little of traditional American moralism in his political rhetoric. Yet, at the same time, his view of policy as a matter of measurable relationships between outputs and inputs cuts him off from a wider vocabulary in which he might think or talk about educational purpose. When pressed on the question of purpose, he must jump tracks, stepping out of his professional role with its concerns about comprehensive policies with clear goals and uniform administration, to speak again in terms of an education that would replicate in other students what he personally has learned and found most valuable. Here public values like good citizenship, skills that enable one to deal with the modern world, and capacities that would make one a productive worker again enter the picture. But they are cast outside the frame of public responsibility as matters of somewhat idiosyncratic personal preference. A professional responsibility for thinking in aggregate terms enforces a narrow technocratic view of policy objectives, which has difficulty incorporating or legitimating wider concerns about educational purpose.[7]

Creative Pragmatism—Centralizing Policy Through An Ideology of Voluntarism

Despite the growing state role in educational administration, no broad, innovative conception of the overall purposes of education has emerged, at least among the administrators and policy-makers I have interviewed. However, in at least some parts of California's Department of Education, new conceptions of an active state role in education have begun to develop. What is most striking about these ideas is that they find a mandate for central policy initiative precisely in an ideology of voluntarism.

The administrators I interviewed in California's Department of Education were surprisingly hostile to ideas of monitoring and compliance, particularly given that monitoring compliance with federal and state legislation is one of their primary responsibilities. These administrators stressed that California's current Superintendent of Public Instruction, Wilson Riles, insisted that state administrators were "not here to govern, but to offer leadership."[8] A staff person in special education, like other administrators I interviewed, said the Department sought ways to emphasize quality, not just compliance; to give assistance to local school districts in achieving educational objectives, rather than simply monitoring their compliance with state and federal laws. "Quality is more than complying with the rules," she said. "You can't mandate quality. No one can define it. Writing rules to mandate quality would be a paradox, a contradiction in terms." A member of the Program Review unit, close to Riles' inner circle, described himself and those close to Riles as even more hostile to compliance. Under Riles, he said, the Department of Education has tried to strongly deemphasize compliance in favor of positive encouragement to local districts to think

about improving educational quality. The first impulse of the state bureaucracy, he said, was of course to try to enforce compliance, but they had learned not to "create a system designed for the bad guy and lay it on everyone.... The bad guys will keep getting away with bad things and will make a business out of dealing with the regulators. Good people will get frustrated, driven out." Indeed, if compliance is important, he said, it is a matter of law, and people who break laws are criminals who should be punished. We don't, he said, enforce other laws by making people report to bureaucrats who constantly monitor their behavior, and we shouldn't enforce educational laws that way either. "The 'comprehensive net' strategy is counterproductive.... It creates permanent damage because it leaves the wrong people in power." Another administrator in the office of Program Evaluation and Research stressed similar obstacles. He pointed out that most of the things people were required to do in the compliance mode were very difficult, sometimes impossible. So the tendency of a compliance orientation is to insist "on things it is possible to demonstrate compliance with, rather than the real goals of programs." The "compliance mentality" tolerated "shallowness and ignorance," directing energy toward simple tasks, "checking forms to make sure the boxes are filled in," while the real problems the programs address are "almost insoluble." People need help understanding programs and putting them in place. Compliance instead produces "manipulation of symbols" and doesn't penetrate to classrooms.

What then takes the place of "compliance" for these California education administrators, who in fact see themselves as still battling the dominant

tendency in their own Department? They have attempted to develop an alternative approach, in which direct monitoring is replaced by indirect pressure, and in which the stress is on assistance to districts and schools to carry out programs they themselves initiate and shape.

The attempt to transform compliance pressures into assistance can be illustrated by the way the office of Program Evaluation and Research of the State Department of Education handled the demands created by the state law (AB 3408) requiring that students pass proficiency examinations in order to graduate from high school. A high-level administrator of Program Evaluation and Research pointed out first that unlike most state programs, the requirement for proficiency exams allowed each school district to set its own standards and assigned no compliance role to the State Department of Education. Instead they were to provide "technical assistance." Technical assistance involved first an elaborate campaign simply to make district administrators and personnel of individual schools aware of the law and its provisions. They prepared an extensive, written Technical Assistance Guide, but also held numerous workshops to "walk people through the law and its application." Key to this approach is the notion that local administrators and teachers are kept from meeting the goals of state programs in large part by not knowing what it is they are supposed to do or how to do it. "A lot of what's called assistance is really just awareness. They just go over the law, without helping you think through what to do. We actually show people <u>how</u> to do what they are supposed to do. They actually work through the tasks themselves." Key to this approach was trying to assure a wide distribution of the skills school districts needed in order to prepare

their own proficiency tests. The Department developed an item bank from which local districts could construct tests, but more significant from the state administrators' point of view, they did "training in developing proficiency assessment, to allow the districts to be more autonomous." The state office of Program Evaluation and Research trained people from local districts in how to construct tests on condition that those people would in turn be loaned to other districts to train other local school personnel. Thus the state "did training of a network of trainers," putting skills in the hands of local school personnel.

Even more central to the ideal of assistance over compliance enforcement was the way the program evaluation and research administrators dealt with problems or potential problems in the proficiency test requirement itself. Many districts, for example, feared lawsuits from parents of students who failed the examinations. Rather than mandating specific standards for tests designed to make them lawsuit-proof, the state officials hired an outside legal consultant to advise districts on the general sorts of steps they might take to develop a "reasonable" program—steps such as giving students sufficient advanced warning, soliciting community input during the development of the test, and so forth. On a more troublesome issue—that of testing children of migrant workers, who might be tested in schools with standards quite different from the schools in which they had actually been educated—the preference for practical solutions over legalistic enforcement was even more in evidence. As the program evaluation administrator put it, from a compliance point of view, it's insoluble, because it's a problem of practice, not policy." Instead of trying to solve the hypothetical tangle

of responsibility this situation might create, his office first did research on the actual school enrollment patterns of migrant workers' children and discovered that the vast majority move among only a few districts. Then his office asked "how could local districts be helped to solve this problem." They then assembled the proficiency standards of the districts that enroll ninety percent of migrant workers' children and had each district compare its own standards with those of the other districts. Then each district knew that it "had the responsibility to teach for the standard of the district where the kid will be." Insoluble as a matter of abstract principle, the problem of giving fair proficiency tests to the children of migrant workers could be solved only by helping local districts with additional information and encouraging them to make changes in their teaching practices which would in turn make their testing programs reasonable.

These state administrators claim that a compliance orientation directs energy away from real educational goals. As an example of "mindless, kneejerk compliance," the program evaluation administrator described demands by some legislators for state review of all proficiency tests to make sure they did not discriminate against minority students. His office instead stressed to concerned legislators that detailed review of all local district tests would be enormously expensive and would take needed resources away from the more crucial objective, making sure students learn more. "I told them that the real issue is how kids are taught. Looking at tests won't help. In fact, if we sent out word that a good test was required for compliance, that would divert energy from the quality of classroom instruction." His office instead tried to make sure local districts understood how to develop a good

proficiency test and then "tried to get people to do a detailed review of their own tests." He acknowledged that there had been relatively "few takers" for this proposal because districts feel too pressed and busy, but his emphasis remained one of stressing voluntarism and self help. Key here is his view of how the state can influence educational policy, and what are the necessary limits of its powers. "We can provide assistance, but we can't coerce them into doing it. If you had compliance powers, where would it get you? How could you really check on whether the procedures were carried out? You have to take someone's word." His office instead tries to elicit willing cooperation. "Ultimately, you won't do it unless you come to believe it's important. We have to persevere with districts, to persuade, importune people to get people to do things." For this, in turn, his office tries to find the best people in local districts and appeal to them and to assign the "top-flight" people at the state level to technical assistance.

This educational administrator proposes no single unified vision of educational policy, but he strongly advocates a general kind of state approach to particular problems—pragmatic, voluntarist, and based on gathering and disseminating information more than on enforcing regulations and rules. One important priority in his view is helping teachers "teach basic skills better." There is a "lot of assistance available," but most of it has never been translated into practical forms that teachers can use. There is a second new wave of proposals to mandate how many years of various subjects high school students must take. "The effect of such legislation is likely to be marginal. The real issue is what kids are taught, not what it's called, and we don't know anything about course content." Now his office

is conducting a preliminary study just to see what the content of courses is in a small set of high schools, and to catalog the percent of students who take which kinds of courses. "You have to collect a base of information against which to test potential interventions." There is also, he feels, a desperate need in the schools for better qualified science teachers, and the teaching profession as a whole is demoralized. But you can't make policy about these issues until you at least find out what is going on.

Information allows pragmatic rather than formal and unrealistic solutions to problems. But the best interventions are those that stimulate voluntary or spontaneous change. The most powerful interventions can be those that are indirect. "The most powerful intervention you could do would be just to change the state code to make school superintendents publish every year a whole lot of data about their schools. Test scores are sent out every year, and they get a lot of newspaper attention. Parents want their local schools to improve students' scores." It would, he argued, have an important effect if schools also had to release data on dropouts, retention rates, the numbers of periods a day of instruction students actually received, and the numbers of students who took different kinds of classes. "Do a 'passive intervention.' Don't tell schools to do things, but create pressures. If nobody cares even after the information is made public, then what would you have done with trying to enforce compliance?" One should, in his view, "try to inspire people to do the best they can do, rather than meet your minimal expectations—or what it's easiest for you to check on."

Two other programs of the California State Department of Education embody

even more fully the strategy of centralization through voluntarism which seems to be emerging in California's educational administration. These are the School Improvement Program, a state sponsored program offering supplemental funding to selected schools, and Program Review, the State's particular version of the task of monitoring compliance with federal education regulations. Both programs, according to state education administrators, attempt to define "compliance" as narrowly and clearly as possible, making it a "vestigial"matter, so that they can devote their best energies to improving "school quality."

The School Improvement Program supplements the budgets of almost half California's schools, with participation in the program concentrated especially in the lower grades. Although the supplement it offers is relatively small, School Improvement monies are important as one of the only supplemental sources of funding schools can seek that is not tied to a specific program or student population. The School Improvement Program was designed in part to encourage community participation in school governance. Participation in the program requires the creation at each school of a School Site Council (SSC) made up of parents, teachers, and (at secondary schools) students. The SSC submits a plan to the state for overall improvement of school programs, based on a comprehensive school plan. Schools then compete for School Improvement funds based on the quality of their plans, the success of other School Improvement schools in the district (as measured by Program Reviews, discussed below, and by a school's success in raising its students' test scores compared to scores of students with comparable background characteristics), and the

apparent commitment of school leadership to making planned improvements.[9]

According to a high level administrator in the Program Review unit, the plans submitted by the School Site Councils are only partially successful. Developing the plan gives the councils "something to do," but "we haven't figured out how to get the schools to own the plan." The difficulty is that they still regard it as "an application or a contract," rather than as a way to develop internal capacities to plan and coordinate their school's educational activities.[10] Thus the School Improvement Program seeks to improve the "quality" of education, not by mandating specific educational changes, but by stimulating a school and its community to galvanize local resources on behalf of educational improvement. This faith in a process of activity and involvement, rather than a specific set of educational innovations, is characteristic of the state effort to reconcile local voluntarism with centralized policy initiative.[11]

Program Review is the state program that most fully embodies the California State Department of Education's regulatory philosophy. The central idea behind Program Review is planning, but not comprehensive planning at the state level. Indeed, according to a top administrator of the program, at the state level the realities are "too complex and ambiguous" for planning. The critical problem is "how rational planning relates to ethical choices," and "the people who really make decisions" don't use plans except for "symbolic cover." Program Review instead attempts to stimulate individual schools to plan for realizing their own educational objectives. This kind of planning, it is hoped, can stimulate a profound process of self-examination and generate a renewed sense of shared purpose in local schools.

Program Review grew from the State's responsibility for monitoring compliance with federal laws. During the 1970s state education administrators became disillusioned with the compliance strategy and began to try to look directly into classrooms to judge the components of effective teaching. According to the program's current administrators, this form of evaluating schools also proved frustrating. Instead of processing forms and "punishing people when the forms weren't right," state administrators found themselves demanding that teachers have measurable objectives, a time schedule that showed they were meeting their objectives, and so forth. Thus attempts at more realistic regulation, more in touch with the realities of classroom life, began to generate more and more heavy-handed and formulaic regulation.

Out of this frustration grew Program Review, carried out as part of the compliance-monitoring mandate of the State Department of Education. All funds that the State administers are monitored through the Consolidated Application Program, so that each school district submits only one application for all the federal and state programs for which it is eligible. But the stress of this program is now on periodic reviews of individual schools, carried out by teams of three to six people sent into local schools for an intensive three-day review of a school's activities and programs. Program Reviews stress improving school quality, rather than monitoring compliance with the demands of specific state and federal programs.

According to top administrators of the program, Program Reviews are designed as strong though voluntarist interventions. They attempt to rearrange the balance of power and alter the self-understanding of local schools. "We want to spark things, provoke things, not control things."

Reviews are process-oriented, in the sense that the state Program Review administrators believe that the review process itself, not compliance with the standards the review mandates, will produce improvements in school quality.

Critical, first, is the idea of the designers of Program Review that evaluation necessarily involves "synthetic value judgments." Thus the review criteria are alarmingly simple by normal regulatory standards, involving only a set of narrative paragraphs, each describing what a good, medium, or bad school should look and feel like. The evaluation teams are encouraged to find out everything they can about the school for three days, interviewing teachers and students, accompanying students through their day's routine, and getting a general feel for the school and its functioning. Then they are to "dip into the pot of information and evidence" they have gathered and make judgments about which of the criterion paragraphs best describes the school's program along each of twelve dimensions.[12]

Program Review is supposed to be "child-centered," focusing on the "received program," the program as children actually experience it, rather than on the program provided by adults. In distinctly 1970s-human-potential-movement style, a top program administrator said that he wants parents and teachers in the school to "think about boredom," recognize it as a common experience of children in school, and "take responsibility" for it. "If we can just get people to think about <u>received</u> program and take responsibility for it, we've achieved a great deal." The administrators' hope is that the experience of going through the review process will itself change the consciousness of members of the local school community about how the school actually operates. This change in consciousness is considered the

essential prerequisite to school improvement.

Program Review administrators freely use moral terms in their description of how the program works. They insist that unlike the stress on compliance, which gives "bad people" in the schools additional power, Program Review depends on finding "good people" in the school who want improvement. "The review is designed to be catalytic in the context of the school's own change process.... It's not designed for data gathering, but for the school itself. You need someone in the school who wants leverage, wants change. It creates a three-day thunderstorm, but someone has to dam up the water." One way to create such change agents in the school is to get them involved in the review process by having them serve on review teams at other schools. Hence program review relies primarily on volunteers, usually parents and teachers, who come to Sacramento for an intensive training program before going out as members of review teams to other schools. This process frequently produces "converts" who are then enthusiastic about applying the program-review approach in their own schools. "The process has to be based on people, not instruments. One of the scariest things for us was to decide to put our best people into training, rather than writing forms and documents."

What then are the purposes this approach to improving educational quality is supposed to serve? Here the ideology of program staff and administrators is well worked out: on the one hand, "the idea of quality will emerge out of the process," and on the other, "what makes a school good is obvious but unspoken. Our purpose is to make the obvious spoken, then get out of town and hope someone does something." What school quality is

is at one level a natural, shared value. But it cannot be imposed by the State, because the specifics vary from school to school. "The chief failures of schools are not in instructional technology, but in how well they are implementing the one they have." Quality depends on the will or capacity of people in local schools to put resources to work, rather than on the resources themselves. Yet at the same time, quality is objective, and evaluators from a wide variety of perspectives can recognize it (after they have been through the State's training program, which trains from 2,500 to 3,000 people a year). However quality is not just a matter of morale; "there is no point in feeling good about bad performance." Rather, quality depends on an internal willingness of people in the school to take responsibility for the way the program actually affects children. This is in part a matter of effective planning wihin the school, so that the various programs a school offers are coordinated and are used to produce optimum eduational quality. A "good school" also has a sense of "craftsmanship, quality workmanship. They want quality kids coming out." A good school has high standards and lets children know that they won't be "patted on the back for sloppy work."

Such an emphasis on quality may require active attention to staff development and training, as well as planning to coordinate the many aspects of the school's program. But above all it requires an active sense of responsibility in the school. Program Review can arouse that sense of responsibility by involving members of the school community in a process of self-evaluation prior to the actual review, and by making the criteria of bad performance "vivid," so that people have to face it. But Program Review can't assure quality. "If we make 30% of schools better, I'm elated.

I see it as a lever, which we let go of. We leave both ends of the lever there, hoping some good people are there to make the school better."

The Program Review unit of the California State Department of Education is a somewhat odd place to look for clues about how aggregate policy planners come to terms with the traditional American language of political and moral debate. Program Review seems to have found a conception of its public mandate precisely in an extreme emphasis on individual and community voluntarism. It seeks to create good education in part by finding and mobilizing "good people," and converting others to an active commitment to quality education. Like other American social movements, it seeks renewed public order through something akin to religious revival, with the difference that this time the revival is to be sparked by state regulators and administrators. One might argue that this individualist form is almost the only shape enhanced public responsibility could take, given the peculiarities of education as a policy arena—a weakly developed and poorly legitimated technology; the role of schooling as the quintessential boundary between the "public" and the autonomous "private" sides of life, and the importance of educational institutions in creating and validating "individuals," the ultimate unit of a voluntarist ideology (Meyer, 1977).[13] But the Program Review administrators were not without the sense that their work embodied active public purposes. Indeed, struck by the similarities between my main informant's language about "taking responsibility for" and "owning" programs and that of est, I asked him whether he had been involved with est. He said, "No. We're contra est. est overplays the individual. This [Program Review] asks you to make value judgments about other people.

We're 'invading other people's space.' esties hate it. They think education is just a way of serving each individual child and parents. We think education has a public purpose."

Aggregate versus Individualist Thinking about Regulation

This paper has relied on drawing a distinction between aggregate versus individualist thinking about public policy. It should be clear by now that there is no necessary incompatibility between individualist thinking and conceptions of collective purpose. Indeed, in American public life, the classic form of public purpose has been the desire to recreate or transform individuals. The public order exists, at some level, for the moral fulfillment and personal happiness of individuals. I have argued, nonetheless, that traditional American public language leaves something of a vacuum when it confronts problems of policy formation and regulation in an increasingly, if always haphazardly, centralized modern state. Here, where problems of policy and regulation often pose themselves as issues about aggregate welfare, or about public purpose that cannot be directly translated into matters of the well-being of individuals, policy makers and regulators are left without guidance from American political traditions.

I can make the distinction between aggregate and individualist policy concerns somewhat clearer by briefly discussing a policy arena where the pressure for aggregate planning is somewhat stronger than it is in education. Aggregate approaches to policy are in part a matter of pragmatic regulatory strategies, but in part they also involve fundamental decisions about the values that underly policy. The PSROs mandated by federal legislation as one prong of the attempt to control health-care costs make efforts to

determine adequate standards of care and reasonable costs for a variety of medical procedures. In order to carry out their cost-containment mandate, PSROs have collected a vast array of aggregate data on particular health care providers and on overall patterns of health services. PSROs have also had different regulatory strategies available. First, based on aggregate data, they could single out individual physicians or clinics with stastically deviant patterns of services or charges, disallowing payments, for example, to a clinic which seemed to do too much optional surgery for the patients it served or to a physician who seemed unnecessarily conservative in the number of days of hospitalization he or she required for patients with a given complaint. Alternatively, the PSROs' panels of providers and community representatives have also been able to develop normative standards of care which could potentially shift the whole pattern of priorities in health-care delivery. While the search for a few deviant, corrupt, or incompetent physicians or clinics remains entirely within individualistic notions of good medical care, the attempt to shift a whole pattern of health services raises wider issues.

W. Richard Scott (1980) has pointed to the tension between the traditional interest of physicians (and, I would argue, most patients) in issues of "micro care" and the emergence of aggregate policy criteria. "Micro care is focused on the needs and interests of individual patients; it is governed by a principle that asserts the needs of an individual as a basis for determining appropriate action." In contrast, health managers and administrators become concerned with issues of "macro care," which "focuses on the characteristics of populations of patients and is governed

by principles applicable to that aggregate—for example, the overall shape of the distribution of services or outcomes, the specification of minimum or modal levels of service" (p. 33). Scott goes on to point out that

> micro and macro principles may conflict: the latter is not simply an aggregated version of the former but represents a new and different basis for determining the distribution of care. For example, a macro-level rule specifying that a given proportion of a hospital's beds be set aside for charity patients may conflict with admission criteria focusing on the needs of individual patients. (p. 33)[14]

The conflict between micro and macro principles is no doubt even more severe when health regulators contemplate limiting health care costs by reducing length of hospital stays or disallowing surgery under certain conditions, knowing that the outcome of those choices will be a certain small but real additional loss of life.[15]

Regulatory strategy can thus be oriented to using aggregate data to pursue what are still basically individualist policy objectives—like identifying incompetent or unscrupulous providers of health care. But responsibility for aggregate policy dilemmas, like controlling health care costs, can also force policy makers and regulators to find a rationale for what they do which presses beyond the individualist language that has traditionally defined the goods public policy should seek. The administrator of a PSRO, interviewed in connection with this paper, confessed that after he had worked more than a year vigorously seeking to contain costs, he had come to a crisis in his job because he "didn't know what 'health' was anymore." That is, he didn't know what value his agency was trying to promote. He was then driven to reconceptualize "health" in terms broader than the traditional medical model of the cure of specific illnesses. Instead he came to define health a general well-being, a conception that

allowed him to think about trade-offs between vast expenditures to cure particular patients and the potential use of those same resources to promote other kinds of welfare.

I have argued that the challenge of aggregate policy-making and regulation is particularly great in a political system which has relied so strongly on an individualist , moralist , and voluntarist language of public policy debate. In an arena like educational policy the strain between traditional definitions of the public goods education is supposed to realize and the approach to which aggregate policy planners are driven is particularly severe. I believe this cultural gap accounts in part for the crisis in educational governance, which is at least in part caused by an inability to formulate legitimate public purposes which would allow federal and state administrators to play an active, constructive role in shaping the educational system which, in spite of themselves, they increasingly control, both fiscally and legally.

When policy makers with responsibility for administering programs that implicitly raise questions about aggregate planning and collective purpose have difficulty linking the work they do to a traditional moral and political vocabulary, it seems to me that there are three possibilities for how they may shape their work. First, policy makers and administrators who deal with aggregate policy matters may operate to some degree in a moral and political vacuum, cut off from a public language that might provide links between technical decision-making and wider conceptions of purpose. In this vacuum, they may rely on their own technical training (the norms of welfare economics or the principles of budgetary analysis) or they may accomodate a technical view of the planning enterprise to a relatively

cynical view of the realities of politics, pressure groups, and interest conflicts. These responses are approximately those I found in the Legislative Analyst who insisted on the primacy of technical analysis of whether programs produced measurable outputs which justified their expense, and of the legislative committee staff member who insisted that policy was impossible in the face of fragmented political realities. Both these policy experts held strong personal views on what constituted a good educational system and on what needed to be done about education in California. But they had difficulty integrating their personal views with their public roles, and they relied, and insisted that others relied, on traditional individualistic imagery about what made a good teacher or a good school or what constituted a good education.

A second possibility for administrators and policy makers who deal with aggregate policy issues is to try to create links between the policy choices they make and the traditional moral and political vocabulary. And the third possibility is that those who deal with aggregate policy concerns may begin to develop new conceptions of collective purpose. The various regulatory programs of the California State Department of Education—the response of the office of Program Evaluation and Research to the task of supervising high-school proficiency examinations; the School Improvement Program; and the approach of the Program Review unit to the task of monitoring compliance with federal legislation—seem to me to embody a mix of the latter two alternatives. In some ways these three programs invoke the most traditional aspects of an individualist, moralist, and voluntarist approach to public policy. They rely on local participation, on identifying or converting good people at the local level to support educational change, and on

the notion that parents, teachers, and administrators in local schools can identify for themselves what kind of quality education they want for their children. At the same time, these state programs legitimate a strong role for central educational authorities in stimulating and facilitating the discovery of purpose and the capacity for planning at the local level. (Critics of these programs would also note that while their ideology is voluntarist, they have real sanctions with which to prod schools and school districts into the kinds of "self-directed" search for improvement they seek to stimulate.) They draw on traditional conceptions of quality education, while they embody and teach a notion that only self-conscious, clearly articulated, shared purposes can be adequate guides to educational excellence. There may even be great significance to the fact that these three state programs seem, each in a slightly different way, to have drawn on some of the language and imagery of the counter-culture of the 1960s and '70s to develop a form of public policy based on faith in group process and the perpetual quest for self-discovery and self-realization. While the belief in self-actualization seems, from one point of view, the ultimate expression of an individualist voluntarism, it also represents a weakening of classical utilitarian notions of the autonomous individual, with fixed needs and wants, who pursues a clearly defined self interest. Selves (and organizations) that are always ready to transform themselves, that have open and fluid rather than fixed identities, may be a product of the growing importance of bureaucratic regulation in a public world supplanting market coordination of purely private motives and interests. For at least this one segment of California education administrators,

creation of public policy based on creative voluntarism means asking individuals to engage in a continually changing public arena within which purposes and values are continually transformed.

There are many policy arenas in which aggregate and individualist modes of thinking may come into conflict. Furthermore, the tension between American individualism and the modern state's drive toward public regulation is likely to be a permanent one. But I would like to end by emphasizing that we can address neither the specific problems of governance in education nor the more general issues of planning, politics, and administration in a welfare state unless we give serious theoretical and research attention to problems of culture. To return again to de Tocqueville, a system of public governance that operates in isolation from an evolving sense of public purpose, and therefore of restraint by such purposes, is indeed the greatest danger to democracy.

NOTES

1. The perspective on public purpose I employ here derives at least in part from the work of Philip Selznick and Philippe Nonet. For a recent summary see Nonet and Selznick (1978). The work of Robert Bellah (1967; 1975) has also strongly influenced my thinking.

2. See Sugarman and Kirp (1975) for an extended treatment of such a view.

3. Murray Edelman (1964; 1971; 1977) has pointed to the crucial role of symbols in political life. Perin (1977), Gusfield (1981), and de Neufville (1981) have used a concern with cultural meanings to examine particular areas of public policy.

4. Philip Selznick (1976) has pointed to the centrality of privatism and voluntarism in the American legal tradition.

5. As David Kirp (1980) has shown, courts have in fact been extremely flexible and willing to adapt to local political realities, even when dealing with matters of rights. Milbrey McLaughlin argues, nonetheless, that courts are ill-equipped to provide effective governance in education. It is also possible that federal and state administrative agencies implementing rights may tend to be more rigidly compliance-oriented than are the courts that mandate rights in the first place, both because the administrative agencies are subject to a different, and potentially more threatening, kind of public scrutiny, and because they necessarily deal with compliance in the aggregate, rather than, as courts do, with individual cases for which individualized remedies may be sought.

6. Shirley Hufstedler, presentation to IFG Law and Education Seminar, March 19, 1981.

7. Robert Bell (1980), in an important study of the ways purposes are formulated and applied in federal policy making, notes that the logic of welfare economics comes to dominate much of the debate over policy options between the Office of Management and Budget and executive agencies because it provides one of the only tools available for thinking about policy in aggregate terms. At the same time, Bell notes, welfare economics offers a narrow, technical conception of purpose, cut off from wider political or moral language.

8. One should, of course, take such statements as symbolic rather than as necessarily realistic descriptions of the working of state bureaucracy. Some legislative staff members, for example, complained that "leadership" was precisely what Riles failed to offer. He had, they claimed, offended the legislature by refusing to make comparative evaluations of educational programs competing for state funds, and he had rarely suggested new legislative initiatives. The State Department of Education, because of its stress on the ideology of voluntarism, might in fact be unlikely to formulate policy of the sort that would be easily translatable into a legislative program.

9. This paragraph is based on an interview with a Program Review administrator and on California State Department of Education (1981a).

10. Outside evaluators give the School Improvement Program mixed reviews. According to Berman et al. (1981), some schools use the program as leverage for educational change, but many others see it simply as a supplemental funding source. More problematic still is the evaluators' argument that the schools most likely to make good use of the School Improvement Program are those which are already functioning well, while the program is of least help to schools which are functioning poorly.

11. Selznick (1976:228) analyzes the tradition in American law of stressing procedure over substantive policy and points up some of its weaknesses for developing conceptions of public purpose.

12. Throughout this section I both paraphrase and quote my informants, relying heavily on information provided by a top administrator of the Program Review unit. Detailed instructions for conducting program reviews can be found in the Elementary Program Review Handbook (California State Department of Education, 1980) and the Secondary Program Review Handbook (California State Department of Education, 1981b).

13. See Dreeben (1968); Weick (1976).

14. See the related distinction between "micro" and "macro" justice in Brickman et al. (1980) and the distinction between "individualized" and "statistical" ways of predicting behavior in Underwood (1979).

15. Calabresi and Bobbitt (1978) argue that a major goal of public policy should be to obfuscate or avoid public choices that involve subordinating the ultimate value of individual lives to any calculus of social or aggregate well-being.

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